



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/592,741	06/13/2000	Theresa M. Gosko	M-9083-US	7322
33438	7590	10/25/2004	EXAMINER	
HAMILTON & TERRILE, LLP P.O. BOX 203518 AUSTIN, TX 78720			FISCHER, ANDREW J	
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER

3627

DATE MAILED: 10/25/2004

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/592,741

Applicant(s)

GOSKO, THERESA M. 36

Examiner

Andrew J. Fischer

Art Unit

3627

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 22 July 2004.
- 2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1, 2 and 4-9 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1, 2, -4-9 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152) |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

Acknowledgements

1. Applicant's amendment filed July 22, 2004 is acknowledged. Accordingly, claims 1, 2, and 4-9 remain pending.
2. This Office Action is written in OACS. Because of this, the Examiner is unable to control formatting, paragraph numbering, font, spelling, line spacing, and/or other word processing issues. The Examiner sincerely apologizes for these errors.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC §101

3. 35 U.S.C. §101 reads as follows:

Whoever invents or discovers any new and useful process, machine, manufacture, or composition of matter, or any new and useful improvement thereof, may obtain a patent therefor, subject to the conditions and requirements of this title.

4. Claims 1, 2, and 4-9 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §101 because the claimed invention is directed to non-statutory subject matter. The basis of this rejection is set forth in a two-prong test:

- (1) The invention must be within the technological arts; and
- (2) The invention must produce a useful, concrete, and tangible result.

5. 35 U.S.C. §101 defines four (4) categories of inventions that Congress deemed to be the appropriate subject matter of a patent; namely, processes, machines, manufactures and compositions of matter. The latter three categories define "things" (or products) while the first category defines "actions" (i.e., inventions that consist of a series of steps or acts to be performed). The Examiner simply asks, which of the four statutory classes has Applicant claimed? One this is known, Applicant's claims must reflect that intent.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC §112 2nd Paragraph

6. The following is a quotation of the 2nd paragraph of 35 U.S.C. §112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

7. Claims 1, 2, and 4-9 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, 2nd paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

a. In claim 1, it is unclear whether the Applicant is claiming the subcombination of 'a data structure' or the combination of 'a data structure' *and* 'a medium. If Applicant intends to claim only the subcombination (*i.e.*, the data structure, the body of the claim(s) must be amended to remove any positive recitation of the combination. Alternatively, if Applicant intends to claim the combination (*i.e.* a data structure *in combination* with a medium), the notice function of the claims requires that the preambles be amended to be consistent with the language in the body of the claim.

b. Claims 2 and 4-9 are indefinite because they refer to the "data structure" of claim 1 yet Applicants states that claim 1 now has a computer readable medium. The scope of these claims is therefore indefinite.

8. The Examiner finds that because claims 1, 2, and 4-9 are indefinite under 35 U.S.C. §112 2nd paragraph, it is impossible to properly construe claim scope at this time. See *Honeywell International Inc. v. ITC*, 68 USPQ2d 1023, 1030 (Fed. Cir. 2003) ("Because the claims are indefinite, the claims, by definition, cannot be construed."). However, in accordance with MPEP §2173.06 and the USPTO's policy of trying to advance prosecution by providing art rejections

Art Unit: 3627

even though these claim are indefinite, the claims are construed and the art is applied *as much as practically possible*.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC §102

9. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. §102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office Action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

10. Claims 1, 2, and 4-9 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Spallone et. al. (U.S. 4,959,686) (“Spallone”). Spallone discloses a data structure *or* a medium.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC §103

11. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. §103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office Action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Art Unit: 3627

12. Claims 1, 2, and 4-9 are alternatively rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Spallone.¹ It is the Examiner's principle position that the claims are anticipated because Spallone discloses a medium.

However, the missing elements in Spallone are only found in the nonfunctional descriptive material and are not functionally involved in claimed elements. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to substitute the content of Spallone with any type of content. The descriptive material will not distinguish the claimed invention over the prior art in terms of patentability because the data does not functionally relate to the steps in the method. See *In re Gulack*, 703 F.2d 1381, 1385, 217 USPQ 401, 404 (Fed. Cir. 1983); *In re Lowry*, 32 F.3d 1579, 32 USPQ2d 1031 (Fed. Cir. 1994). See also MPEP §2106 IV B.

13. The Examiner concludes that Applicant has decided not to be her own lexicographer (including "a system type element") by indicating and defining claim limitations to have meanings other than their ordinary and accustomed meanings. To support this position, the Examiner relies on the following factual findings. First and as noted in the previous Office Action,² the Examiner has carefully reviewed the specification and prosecution history and can not locate any lexicographic definition(s). Second, the Examiner finds that not only has Applicant not pointed to definitional statements in his specification or prosecution history (except for "a system type element"), Applicant has also not pointed to a term or terms in a claim

¹ See MPEP §2112 expressly authorizing alternative §102/§103 rejections when the question of inherency is present in the anticipation rejection.

² See the Examiner's previous Office Action mailed March 18, 2004, Paper No. 14, Paragraph No. 15.

Art Unit: 3627

with which to draw in those statements³ with the required clarity, deliberateness, and precision.⁴ Third, after receiving express notice in the previous Office Action of the Examiner's position that lexicography is not invoked,⁵ Applicant has not pointed out the "supposed errors" in the Examiner's position regarding lexicography invocation in accordance with 37 C.F.R. §1.111(b) (*i.e.* Applicant has not argued lexicography is invoked). Finally and to be sure of Applicant's intent, the Examiner also notes that Applicant has declined the Examiner's express invitation⁶ to be his own lexicographer.⁷ Accordingly and for due process purposes, the Examiner gives notice that for the remainder of the examination process (and unless expressly noted otherwise by the Examiner), the heavy presumption in favor of the ordinary and accustomed meaning is not

³ "In order to overcome this heavy presumption in favor of the ordinary meaning of claim language, it is clear that a party wishing to use statements in the written description to confine or otherwise affect a patent's scope must, *at the very least*, point to a term or terms in the claim with which to draw in those statements. [Emphasis added.]" *Johnson Worldwide Assocs. v. Zebco Corp.*, 175 F.3d 985, 989, 50 USPQ2d 1607, 1610 (Fed. Cir. 1999).

⁴ "The patentee's lexicography must, of course, appear 'with reasonable clarity, deliberateness, and precision' before it can affect the claim." *Renishaw PLC v. Marposs Societa' per Azioni*, 158 F.3d 1243, 1249, 48 USPQ2d 1117, 1121 (Fed. Cir. 1998) citing *In re Paulsen*, 30 F.3d 1475, 1480, 31 USPQ2d 1671, 1674 (Fed. Cir. 1994).

⁵ See again the Examiner's previous Office Action, Paper No. 14, Paragraph No. 15.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ The Examiner's requirements on this matter were reasonable on at least two separate and independent grounds. First, the Examiner's requirements were simply an express request for clarification of how Applicant intend his claims to be interpreted so that lexicography (or even an *attempt* at lexicography) by Applicant was not inadvertently overlooked by the Examiner. Second, the requirements were reasonable in view of the USPTO's goals of compact prosecution, productivity with particular emphasis on reductions in both pendency and cycle time, and other goals as outlined in the USPTO's The 21st Century Strategic Plan, February 3, 2003 available at www.uspto.gov/web/offices/com/strat21/index.htm (last accessed October 17, 2004).

Art Unit: 3627

overcome; the claims therefore continue to be interpreted with their “broadest reasonable interpretation” *In re Morris*, 127 F.3d 1048, 1054, 44 USPQ2d 1023, 1027 (Fed. Cir. 1997).⁸ The Examiner now relies heavily and extensively on this interpretation.⁹ Unless expressly noted otherwise by the Examiner, the preceding claim interpretation principles in this paragraph apply to all examined claims currently pending.

14. Additionally, the Examiner notes that “the PTO and the CCPA acknowledged product-by-process claims as an exception to the general rule requiring claims to define products in terms of structural characteristics.” *Atlantic Thermoplastics Co. v. Faytex Corp.*, 970 F.2d 834, 845, 23 USPQ2d 1481, 1490 (Fed. Cir. 1992) (hereinafter “*Atlantic Thermoplastics v. Faytex I*”). Furthermore, the Federal Circuit “acknowledges that it has in effect recognized . . . product-by-process claims as exceptional.” *Atlantic Thermoplastics v. Faytex I*, 970 F.2d at 847, 23 USPQ2d at 1491.

Because of this exceptional status, the Examiner has carefully reviewed the claims and it is the Examiner’s position that the claims 1, 2, and 4-9 *do not* contain any product-by-process limitations whether in a conventional format or otherwise. If Applicant disagrees with the Examiner, the Examiner respectfully requests Applicant in her next properly filed response to expressly point out any product-by-process claim(s) and their limitations so that they may be

⁸ See also *In re Bass*, 314 F.3d 575, 577, 65 USPQ2d 1156, 1158 (Fed. Cir. 2002) (“In examining a patent claim, the PTO must apply the broadest reasonable meaning to the claim language, taking into account any definitions presented in the specification. Words in a claim are to be given their ordinary and accustomed meaning unless the inventor chose to be his own lexicographer in the specification”) (citations omitted); *In re Etter*, 756 F.2d 852, 858, 225 USPQ 1, 5 (Fed. Cir. 1985) (en banc); and MPEP §§ 2111 and 2111.01.

⁹ See 37 C.F.R. §1.104(c)(3) which states in part: “the examiner may rely upon admissions by applicant . . . as to *any matter* affecting patentability [Emphasis added.]”

Art Unit: 3627

afforded their exceptional status and treated accordingly. Applicant is reminded that “even though product-by-process claims are limited by and defined by the process, determination of patentability is based on the product itself.” *In re Thorpe*, 777 F.2d 695, 697, 227 USPQ 964, 966 (Fed. Cir. 1985) (citations omitted).¹⁰ Failure by Applicant in her next properly filed response to also address this issue in accordance with 37 C.F.R. §1.111(b) or to be non-responsive to this issue entirely will be considered intent by Applicant *not* to recite any product-by-process limitations. Unless expressly noted otherwise by the Examiner, the preceding discussion on product-by-process principles applies to all examined claims currently pending.

Response to Arguments

15. Applicant’s arguments filed July 22, 2004 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

16. Regarding the §101 rejections, Applicant argues that states that the claims have been amended to recite a computer readable medium. This intent makes the scope of the claims therefore greater than just a data structure since data structures are a subset or subcombination of a computer medium. Because of the amendment to claim 1, the scope of the claims is now indefinite. See the §112 2nd paragraph rejections above.

17. Applicant also argues that her invention “relates to” to this. Whether or not a claimed invention “relates to” something is immaterial when determining anticipation and/or obviousness. As Judge Clevenger has so eloquently summarized these types of arguments, “The

¹⁰ See also MPEP §2113.

Art Unit: 3627

invention disclosed in [Applicant's] written description may be outstanding in its field, but the name of the game is the claim." *In re Hiniker Co.*, 150 F.3d 1362, 1369, 47 USPQ2d 1523, 1529 (Fed. Cir. 1998).

18. Regarding lexicography, Applicant states that she intends to be her own lexicographer for the term "system type element" and refers the Examiner to Page 11, lines 4-6. A review of the original specification on page 11, lines 4-6 will reveal the following:

restarted. The System Type element tells a user whether a product is bundled, i.e., is a commodity item, or custom, i.e., is a non-commodity item. The System Discontinue Date element provides the date by which a system is discontinued. The System Discontinue Date. Applicant's original specification, Page 11, lines 4-6.

19. This section is hardly a lexicographic definition. In particular, while the statement clearly tells at least one function of the "system type element," this exemplary function is not a lexicographic definition since it fails to establish lexicography with the required reasonable clarity, deliberateness, and precision. See *Renishaw PLC v. Marposs Societa' per Azioni* citing *In re Paulsen*, *infra*. Moreover, "in redefining the meaning of particular claim terms away from the ordinary meaning, the intrinsic evidence must 'clearly set forth' or 'clearly redefine' a claim term so as to put one reasonably skilled in the art on notice that the patentee intended to so redefine the claim term . . ."). *Bell Atlantic Network Services Inc. v. Covad Communications Group Inc.*, 262 F.3d 1258, 1268, 59 USPQ2d 1865, 1870 (Fed. Cir. 2001). In this case, the quoted statement on page 11 does not "clearly redefine" 'a system type element.'

20. Applicant is reminded that when open-ended examples in the specification are only illustrative, they can not limit claim terms. *Prima Tek II LLC v. Polypap S.A.R.L.*, 318 F.3d 1143, 1151, 65 USPQ2d 1818, 1823 (Fed. Cir. 2003) ("The written description makes quite clear that

Art Unit: 3627

the open-ended examples of 'floral holding material' are merely illustrative; that is, they do not exhaustively delineate the 'floral holding material' that is clearly defined in the claims.").

21. Ordinarily this would result in a §112 2nd paragraph rejection. However, after careful review of the pending claims, "a system type element" is not currently recited in *any* pending claim. Therefore as currently claimed, whether or not Applicant acts as her own lexicographer for "a system type element" is currently moot.

Conclusion

22. **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL.** Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 C.F.R. §1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire **THREE MONTHS** from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within **TWO MONTHS** of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the **THREE-MONTH** shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than **SIX MONTHS** from the mailing date of this final action.

23. The following two (2) citations to the Manual of Patent Examining Procedure ("MPEP") apply to this Office Action: MPEP citations to Chapters 100, 200, 500, 600, 700, 1000, 1100, 1300, 1400, 1500, 1700, 1800, 2000, 2100, 2200, 2500, 2600, and 2700 are from the MPEP 8th

Art Unit: 3627

Edition, Rev. 2, May 2004. All remaining MPEP citations are from MPEP 8th Edition, August 2001.

24. Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

25. Because this application is now final, Applicant is reminded of the USPTO's after final practice as discussed in MPEP §714.12 and §714.13 and that entry of amendments after final is *not* a matter of right. "The refusal of an examiner to enter an amendment after final rejection of claims is a matter of discretion." *In re Berger*, 279 F.3d 975, 984, 61 USPQ2d 1523, 1529 (Fed. Cir. 2002) (citations omitted). Furthermore, suggestions or examples of claim language provided by the Examiner are just that—suggestions or examples—and do not constitute a formal requirement mandated by the Examiner. Unless stated otherwise by an express indication that a claim is "allowed," exemplary claim language provided by the Examiner to overcome a particular rejection or to change claim interpretation has *not been addressed* with respect to other aspects of patentability (*e.g.* §101 patentable subject matter, §112 1st paragraph written description and enablement, §112 2nd paragraph indefiniteness, and §102 and §103 prior art). Therefore, any claim amendment submitted under 37 C.F.R. §1.116 that incorporates an Examiner suggestion or example or simply changes claim interpretation will nevertheless require further consideration and/or search and a patentability determination as noted above.

Art Unit: 3627

26. It is the Examiner's factual determination that all limitations in claims 1, 2, and 4-9 have been considered and are either disclosed or inherent in the references as discussed above.

Furthermore, the inherent features are established by a preponderance of the evidence. *In re Epstein*, 32 F.3d 1559, 1564, 31 USPQ2d 1817, 1820 (Fed. Cir. 1994) ("Preponderance of the evidence is the standard that must be met by the PTO in making rejections." (citations and quotations omitted)). The preceding discussion in this paragraph regarding the standard for claim rejections applies to all examined claims currently pending.

27. In accordance with the USPTO's goals of customer service, compact prosecution, and reduction of cycle time, the Examiner has made every effort to clarify his position regarding claim interpretation and any rejections or objections in this application. Furthermore, the Examiner has again provided Applicants with notice—for due process purposes—of his position regarding his factual determinations and legal conclusions. The Examiner notes and thanks Applicant for her "Remarks" (beginning on page 4) traversing the Examiner's positions on various points. If Applicant disagrees with any additional factual determination or legal conclusion made by the Examiner in this Office Action whether expressly stated or implied,¹¹ the Examiner respectfully reminds Applicant to properly traverse the Examiner's position(s) in accordance with 37 C.F.R. §1.111(b) in her next properly filed response. By addressing these issues now, matters where the Examiner and Applicant agree can be eliminated allowing the Examiner and Applicant to focus on areas of disagreement (if any) with the goal towards allowance in the shortest possible time. If Applicant has any questions regarding the Examiner's positions or has other questions regarding this communication or even previous communications,

Art Unit: 3627

Applicant is strongly encouraged to contact Examiner Andrew J. Fischer whose telephone number is (703) 305-0292. If attempts to reach the Examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the Examiner's immediate supervisor, Robert Olszewski, can be reached at (703) 308-5183. The fax number for facsimile responses is now (703) 872-9306.

Handwritten signature of Andrew J. Fischer, dated Oct, 21, 2004.

Andrew J. Fischer
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 3627

AJF
October 17, 2004

¹¹ E.g., if the Examiner rejected a claim under §103 with two references, although not directly stated, it is the Examiner's implied position that the references are analogous art.